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Mpezeni

Chapter One

THE LONG MARCH

1. Sources 2. The Nguni background 3. Foundation of the State 4. The residential system 5. Under Zwangendaba's leadership 6. Fission 7. Mpezeni's kingdom 8. Foreign policy

1. *Sources*

WHAT WE usually have in mind when we speak of a tribe or nation or empire is a large political unit enduring in time and space. The nation outlives its members, for as they grow old and die their children and grandchildren rise up to take their places. On its fringes there may be continual fluctuations, adjustments of boundaries and migrations of people, but always the majority of the population are born within the national territory and die within it as their ancestors have done before them. There is spatial continuity as well as biological continuity, and the same areas of land, sometimes even the same houses and fields, are occupied and cultivated by successive generations. The Ngoni State, whose history is the subject of this book, was clearly not a state of this kind. It was born suddenly, moved about from one part of Africa to another, and recruited most of its members from outside itself. Only at the end of the nineteenth century, when colonial rule was imposed by Europeans, was the migration of the Ngoni as an organized group brought to an end. Even so, the social and economic development of modern central Africa has ensured that the men and women who from time to time live in Ngoni tribal areas, fixed though these have become, are now part of a wider social system within which they travel great distances in search of work and of kinsmen, wives and friends. Yet despite these differences the Ngoni State, like other states and polities, has had structural, or institutional, continuity. It is an enduring organized social group with a history. The same forms of social organization have endured despite changes in space and despite biological discontinuity; and where these forms have changed there has been continuity even in change.

This history of the Ngoni from 1821 down to 1898 is essentially the history of an armed nation on the march. Our knowledge of it

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kingdom under Sobhuza I and Mswati and the various Ngoni States. Despite their common social and cultural origin these emergent polities had each its distinctive features. The special characteristics of Ngoni society are at least in part understandable as due to the differences in its social environment as compared with Zulu and Swazi. The Ngoni were migrants, whereas Zulu and Swazi were not. The Ngoni captured a large number of men and women of non-Nguni origin who were assimilated into the Ngoni State as individuals, whereas for the most part the Zulu and Swazi States expanded by the incorporation of existing social groups as groups, not as individuals, and these groups, if not all Nguni in origin, at least belonged to closely allied peoples.

Thus to set the Ngoni in proper perspective we must begin with a brief description of their Nguni forebears. In the eighteenth century the Nguni were grouped into a large number of small chiefdoms each containing a dominant agnatic lineage segment to which the chief belonged. Each chiefdom contained segments of other lineages, and most lineages had segments in a number of chiefdoms, one segment being dominant in its chiefdom. Lineages were exogamous, their members were graded in terms of primogeniture and the ranking of wives, and as a result of quarrels segments transferred their allegiance from one chief to another or even founded new chiefdoms. Most residential settlements were small, containing only the agnatic descendants of a living man, with their wives and children, and were divided into three sections or 'houses', led by the great, right- and left-hand wives of the polygynous head of the settlement. There were also larger homesteads containing the dwellings of chiefs and other members of the dominant lineage as well as those of many genealogically unrelated dependants. The chief was assisted by his agnatic kinsmen and by the heads of non-chiefly lineage segments and by other unrelated men whom he placed as lieutenants, or indunas, in charge of districts or responsible for specific administrative, judicial or military tasks. For fighting and hunting the men of the chiefdom were organized in divisions, each attached to a royal homestead. There was also an organization of youths into small age-sets, groupings of coevals who had been circumcised together.

At the turn of the century, with the emergence of large kingdoms, each containing many chiefdoms under the leadership of a king, the age-set system changed its form and the royal homesteads acquired greater significance. Circumcision was discontinued and the age-sets began to be organized on a national basis. Each age-set constituted a regiment in the national army, had it barracks

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at a royal homestead, and was led by a nominee of the king, usually a prince or chief. Other royal homesteads, called 'heads', were in charge of princes and were the foci of allegiance of groups of chiefdoms within the kingdom.

Thus every man owed allegiance in several places. He had obligations to his agnatic lineage, and in particular to that segment of the lineage within the chiefdom to which he belonged. Local matters, questions arising over land and cattle, and quarrels between neighbours, were settled by discussion between agnates or by reference to the lieutenant appointed by the chief to look after the district. Every man was also a member of a division of his chiefdom, and hunted wild beasts with his fellows in the division. He was a member of his chiefdom as against other chiefdoms, and looked to his chief for assistance in his affairs, even as the chief relied on the support of his people in his own struggles with other chiefs. In the nation, every man belonged to a regiment, fought and danced alongside his regimental age-mates drawn from every chiefdom, and was expected to support the prince who commanded the regiment. Finally he was a member of a 'head' and within his regiment was grouped together with others from the same head. A man might change his chiefdom, but his allegiance to regiment and head were fixed.[6]

The Ngoni State was founded in the 1820's by men and women, perhaps a thousand in number, who had grown up in a social system of this kind. Certain parts of the system were dropped, others were developed. In effect, the system was simplified and adapted to the life of migrant brigandage which the Ngoni enjoyed for some seventy years. The old alignment of agnatic lineages disappeared, for the great majority of Ngoni joined the system by capture, not by birth. In its place a quasi-agnatic residential system was evolved, in which men and women bore allegiance not to their own agnatic seniors but to their lord or captor. This system was, however, tied in with an arrangement of royal homesteads which in itself was a development of the division of polygynous households into great, left- and right-hand 'houses'. There were no chiefdoms within the nation, for the nation began, as it were, as a *tabula rasa* without significant relics of earlier chiefly alignments. The age-set system remained the basis of military organization, but there were no royal or chiefly commanders appointed over regiments and there were no regimental barracks. Instead the bulk of the population lived in large villages which resembled the former royal homesteads and military barracks but in which men

[6] Based on Bryant, *Olden times*, and Gluckman, 'Kingdom of the Zulu'.

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MAP A. NGONI MIGRATIONS 1821–1900

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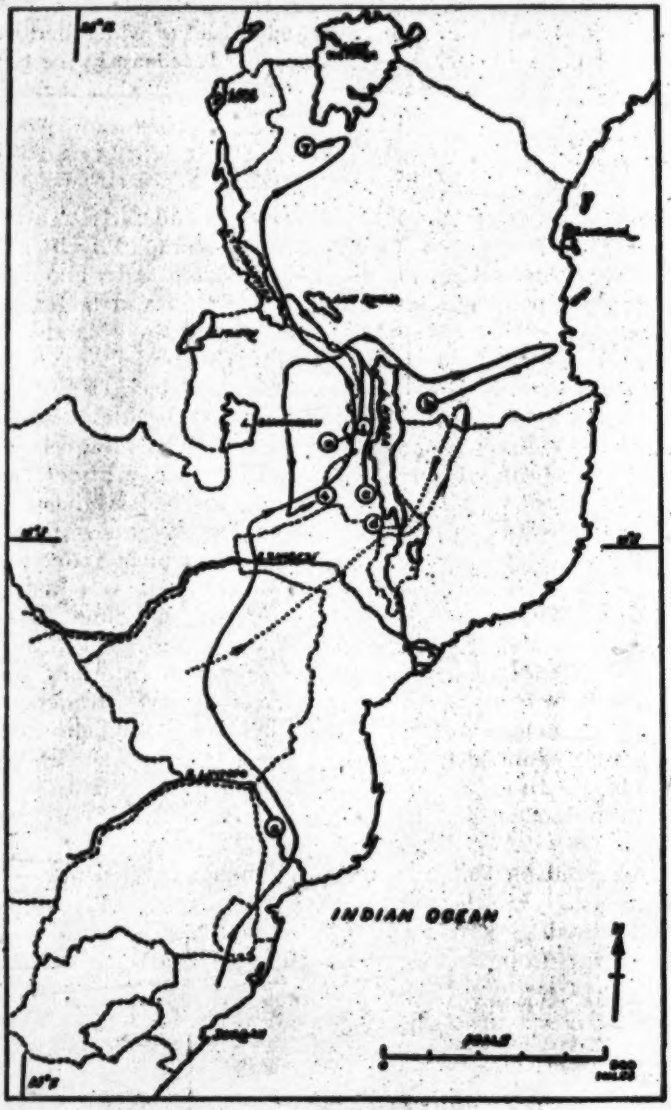

——— Route of groups stemming from Zwangendaba.

·····⊖····· Route of Maseko Ngoni of Southern Nyasaland.

– – – – – – Modern political boundaries (1958).

① Northern Nyasaland group, under Mwambera.
② Fort Jameson group, under Mpezeni.
③ Runsewe group, under Mtumbalika and Mtumbalala.
④ Lundazi group, under Magodi.
⑤ Songea group, under Zulu Gama.
⑥ Dowa group, under Chiwere ndhlovu.
⑦ Southern Nyasaland group, originally under Mputa Maseko.
⑧ Gazaland group, under Soshangane.

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They became known as the Rhodesian Ndebele or Matabele. Posselt, who worked among them, does not record in their history any fight with Zwangendaba, nor do Elmslie, Bryant, Young or Chibambo. Money and Smith say that it is a matter of doubt whether or not Zwangendaba met Mzilikazi. However, Wiese, who states that Zwangendaba broke away from Mzilikazi, says that there was a fight between them. Lancaster writes that there was a fight on the Transvaal border in 1828 before the raid of 1833. Poole makes this fight take place in about 1833 and writes of the Ngoni at that time living in the vicinity of modern Bulawayo and raiding Mzilikazi in the Transvaal. If we are to accept the existence of contact between Zwangendaba and Mzilikazi at all, either of these two versions is preferable to that of Winterbottom, who implies that after taking part in the 1833 raid at Delagoa Bay, Zwangendaba moved to the vicinity of Bulawayo where he met Mzilikazi, only to move on to the Zambezi in 1835. Winterbottom crowds into two years more marching and fighting than seems likely to have taken place. There is also conclusive evidence, set out by Posselt, that Mzilikazi did not leave the Transvaal under Boer pressure until about 1838.

If Zwangendaba and Mzilikazi were not living side by side, the suggestion by Lancaster and Winterbottom that they quarrelled about a dog is unlikely to be correct. There may be confusion here with the story, recorded by Field and Rangeley, of a quarrel between Mpezeni and Mwambera over their dogs.[2]

6. *Fission*

Various writers describe three occasions on which, according to their accounts, dissident sections broke off from the main body of Ngoni prior to Zwangendaba's death. Our view is that only one of these secessions actually took place, and that it was relatively unimportant.

The first allegedly dissident group is that sometimes known as the Maseko Ngoni, now dwelling in the region round Mount Domwe, on both sides of the border between southern Nyasaland and Portuguese East Africa. Murray, Young, Hatchell, Poole and Bruwer state that after crossing the River Zambezi together, the Ngoni of southern Nyasaland broke off from Zwangendaba while he was in Nsenga country. Laws, Johnson, Soga, Lancaster and Rangeley state that these Ngoni crossed the Zambezi separately from Zwangendaba. Elmslie says that they were not an offshoot of Zwangendaba's party, while Read, Chibambo and Winterbottom state that they broke away from Mzilikazi, not from Zwangendaba. Fraser mentions a group that remained behind when Zwangendaba crossed the river and says that it went on to the east of Lake Nyasa, but does not say that it later returned to southern Nyasaland. Of all these writers, Read has had most contact with the Ngoni of southern Nyasaland, and her account, as amplified by Winter-

[2] Poole, *Native tribes*, p. 5; Winterbottom, 'Outline histories', pp. 15*f*; Lancaster, 'Chronology', pp. 78, 85; Young, *History*, pp. 109*f*; Money and Smith, 'Explorations', p. 150; Posselt, *Fact and fiction*, p. 171, Field, *Visiilano*, pp. 16*f*; Rangeley, 'Mtwalo', p. 63.

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bottom, seems the most acceptable.[23] Two other versions of this alleged dissension can also be rejected. Bryant says that the southern Nyasaland Ngoni remained behind after the main body had crossed the river and that they were led by Gwasa (*sic*), Zwangendaba's principal headman. Stigand's account is similar, except that he says they broke off after crossing the river. This conflicts with the evidence of Young and Chibambo of the subsequent part played by Gwaza, first lieutenant in segment 1, with Zwangendaba's own group. We must also reject the contention of Coxhead and Hodgson that the southern Nyasaland group broke away from the main body of Ngoni after Zwangendaba's death in Tanganyika Territory. The statement made by Stanley and followed by numerous other writers that the Hehe are an Ngoni group is quite without foundation.[24] Some other communities in southern Tanganyika who were merely raided by Ngoni have themselves taken the name Ngoni or some other name used by Ngoni.[25]

Poole speaks in one place of 'the secession of Nquaba' (Nxaba) from Zwangendaba, but this does not tally with his earlier statements that Nxaba's migration was independent of Zwangendaba, and that the first secession from Zwangendaba's host was that of the southern Nyasaland Ngoni. Bryant's account of Nxaba is much fuller than Poole's, and contradicts Poole's suggestion that Nxaba crossed the Zambezi at the Lupata Gorge. According to Bryant, Nxaba's group never formed part of Zwangendaba's following, and Nxaba was eventually killed in Barotseland. Chibambo and Winterbottom support Bryant.[26]

Posselt, who worked among Mzilikazi's people, states that a section of Zwangendaba's group, composed of Swazi, broke off at about the time of the Zambezi crossing and turned back to join Mzilikazi who married the woman who led the dissident section.

[23] The secession of the southern Nyasaland Ngoni from Mzilikazi may explain Wiese's and Decle's assertions that Zwangendaba himself broke away from Mzilikazi. Wiese, 'Expedição', p. 466; Decle, *Savage Africa*, p. 151.

[24] Murray, *Handbook*, p. 30; Young, *History*, p. 111, and letter in *African Studies*, 1950; Hatchell, 'Angoni' (1935), p. 69; Poole, *Native tribes*, p. 7; Bruwer, *Mbiri*, p. 11; Laws, p. 85, f.n.1, in Lugard, *East African Empire*, i; Johnson, *Nyasa*, p. 102; Soga, *South-Eastern Bantu*, p. 275; Lancaster, 'Chronology', pp. 78, 85; Elmslie, *Introductory Grammar*, p. x; Read, 'Tradition', p. 464; Chibambo, *My Ngoni*, p. 31; Winterbottom, 'Histories', p. 16; Fraser, *Primitive people*, pp. 312*f*; Bryant, *Olden times*, p. 465; Stigand, 'Natives', p. 126; Coxhead, *Native tribes*, p. 20; Hodgson, 'Dowa District', p. 128; Stanley, *Dark Continent*, i, pp. 499, 503; Rangeley, 'Mtwalo', pp. 56, 62.

[25] Maples, *Journals*, p. 15; Weule, *Native Life*, p. 339.

[26] Poole, *Native tribes*, pp. 7 and 6; Bryant, *Olden times*, pp. 277, 279, 454, 460*f*, 471*f*; Chibambo, *My Ngoni*, p. 16; Winterbottom, 'Outline histories', p. 16.

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This story is followed by Bryant but does not occur in any accounts collected from Ngoni themselves. It seems probable therefore that this seceding section was not numerous or important.[87]

There are no other disruptions mentioned in the literature, and it seems probable therefore that until the death of Zwangendaba, the State remained largely intact. However the process, common in Bantu Africa, by which rival claimants to a throne succeed only in dividing their kingdom, operated with striking effect as soon as the founder of the State was buried. The elimination of segment 18 has sometimes been suggested as the reason why the State broke up, but it is clear from comparative considerations that a State of this kind was likely at any time to break into a number of independent groups, and that this tendency was greatest at the death or senescence of the king.

About 1840 a number of important people, mainly coming from south of the Zambezi, were killed off as a result of an internal struggle for power in which it appears that the recently captured Tumbuka, who were successful witch-finders, were allied with the Swazi and other Ndandwe against the Tsonga from the Delagoa Bay region.[88] Unfortunately there is very little information available on the relationship of this struggle to the rest of the political system. It is, however, clear that the effect of killing off a large number of Ngoni of Tsonga origin was insufficient to prevent the State breaking up a few years later.

When Zwangendaba died, his sons were still young and, for the time being, effective leadership of the State was disputed between men of his own generation whose positions are shown in Diagram 2. His brothers, the lords of segments 5 and 6, were already dead. Fraser describes the dispute as a struggle between Ntabeni's children and Mgayi. Ntabeni was a younger brother of Zwangendaba and the lord of segment 7 while Mgayi was Zwangendaba's father's younger brother's son who, on Chibambo's evidence, represented the interests of the residue of segment 1. Rangeley has a slightly different version and makes Mgayi a supporter of segment 4. Poole, presumably following Fraser, says with some qualification that Ntabeni and Mgayi both claimed the chieftainship. From what we know of the south-eastern Bantu, and from our knowledge of present-day Ngoni, it seems unlikely that a brother would claim to be the legitimate heir in preference to a son, however much he might strive to gain ascendancy over the son. It seems preferable to follow Young and Chibambo in regarding Ntabeni and Mgayi

[87] Posselt, *Fact and fiction*, pp. 146-7, 176; Bryant, *Olden times*, pp. 464*f*.
[88] See p. 87.

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procedure. Segment 2 broke away from segment 3 and later rejoined it peaceably, but other instances of fission were accompanied by fighting. The leader of each divergent group rallied his warriors, the one to protect his flight, the other to pursue and annihilate the departing traitors. If the flight was successful, the leader of the new State assumed the salutations and marks of rank of a Paramount Chief and held his own first fruits ceremony. The internal organization of his State and of the one he had left continued on the same lines as before. This seems to have been the sequence of events when Zulu Gama, Ciwele Ndhlovu, and segment 7 each broke away from the main body. When the residue of segment 1 broke away from segment 4, the dissident group destroyed the crops of those who remained, but Chibambo does not mention fighting on that occasion.[42] There are two possible instances of a divergent group going away to join some other state. Segment 7 was associated for a while with Mirambo and his Rugaruga, and Zulu Gama joined forces in Tanganyika with the Maseko Ngoni, now in southern Nyasaland.[44] But neither of these alliances lasted long. As we would expect there is less evidence for the unsuccessful attempts at fission which it seems reasonable to assume must have taken place. I did, however, collect one clear account of a regional governor who was thought by Zwangendaba to be lagging behind on the migration with the intention of deserting with his segment. Zwangendaba sent an army against the regional governor, who was killed. His segment, under the charge of his son, was forced to live in the village of a lieutenant of Zwangendaba's father. It is said that Zwangendaba continued to punish the would-be rebels by drafting members of the segment to other parts of the residential system from time to time.

Thus in one sense the State was held together by armed force. Certainly there were mystical values associated with the chieftainship. It is now difficult to gain much precise information on this topic but it is apparent from present-day practice and from comparative evidence that the chiefly office was hedged about with mystical sanctions and that the chief was no mere secular ruler. Yet it is also clear that these values were associated with the office of chieftainship rather than with the particular occupant of the office, and that they were linked to successful military achievement. We might also suggest that because so many men became Ngoni only after they had grown up in quite different cultures, mystical

[42] Chibambo, *My Ngoni*, p. 34.
[44] Stanley, *Livingstone*, p. 289, and *Dark Continent*, i, p. 499; Hatchell, 'Angoni', *passim*.

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sanctions were less effective than they are in more homogeneous societies; but this can hardly be proved. The fact remains that some segments did break off, that the State attempted to annihilate them, and that sometimes they were successful, probably sometimes not. The transition was sharp between the condition in which a segment was an integral loyal part of the State and that in which it was itself a new State. Spatially a State was surrounded by a no-man's-land. Everything inside the uninhabited ring of country was in the State, everything outside it was not. Within the State there was no feuding such as sometimes characterizes societies whose political boundaries are not uniquely defined. In Ngoni society, murder was punished by the State, and the cattle paid by the murderer's kin were handed over to the Paramount Chief, not to the kin of the murdered man. The Paramount Chief, it is true, usually handed on the cattle to them, but the method of settlement is indicative of the power of the State. There was only one national first fruits ceremony, accompanied by summary penalties of death for those whose actions threatened its mystical effectiveness, as for example by singing the ceremonial songs at the wrong time. Furthermore, there was a single age-set system, in which the members of each set were drawn from all segments, and because of the activities of the sets, the segments united in aggression against the external world.

When a split threatened, the issue was decided by force of arms. Yet in a quite significant sense the cohesion of the State was not based on force at all. The Paramount Chief had no monopoly of force, for as we have seen there were representatives of every major segment in each age-set, and any lord who could claim the loyal support of his segment had at his disposal a fighting force as efficient as that of anyone else. Within the army there was little or no technical, as distinct from tactical, specialization and the Paramount Chief had no bodyguard or other specially recruited force on which he could rely. The Ngoni were contemptuous of guns, for the Tower muskets used by the Arabs and others could not penetrate their shields at normal firing range, and such guns as the Ngoni possessed were used only for making a noise.[45] There was no strong central power posed against the provincial lords, as in some societies. The strength of any segment was measured by its internal cohesion, its size and fighting ability, as matched against the cohesion, size and ability of the forces that could be marshalled against it. While he was loyal, expansion in a man's segment

[45] Wiese, 'Expedição', p. 477, and 'Geschichte', p. 196; Read, 'Tradition', p. 461, f.n1; Young, *History*, p. 125.

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619 631 brought more support for his lord; but as the segment expanded his chances of setting himself up as a chief increased and his loyalty became less certain. Thus the appeal to armed force came only as one phase in a general struggle for power carried on simultaneously at many different levels and by a variety of methods. The conflicting ambitions of each lord, each a potential rival of the State, [669] combined to maintain the State and to reduce the likelihood of successful fission.

692 643 681 631 The conflict between identification with one's lord and differentiation from him, between what Fortes has called the centripetal and centrifugal forces in a segmentary society, is brought out clearly in the enforcement of the death penalty. Wiese implies that only the Paramount Chief had the legal power to sentence adulterers to death and that this offence was the ground for the [684] majority of death sentences.[46] However, my own informants stated that senior lieutenants did sometimes sentence people to death without referring the matter to the Paramount Chief. The Chief would later come to hear of an incident of this kind and would then either praise the lieutenant for acting in the interests of the Chief and for ruling his people well, or else abuse him for usurping the powers of the Chief and warn him to be more careful in future. A successful lieutenant might establish his own major segment and [687] eventually his own State; but if he moved in this direction prematurely he was likely to be killed for treason. This same inherent conflict exists to-day, albeit with different groupings and different sanctions.

7. *Stability*

611 619 178 The most striking differences between the residential system and most lineage systems were the high rate of segmentation, and the flexibility of the system. Segmentation in a lineage system depends basically on the unalterable processes of human reproduction and maturation. Until a man's children become adults his agnatic segment cannot split. The Ngoni, by recruiting many [161] of their members when they were already grown up, were able to [597] increase their population at a prodigious rate and with it the degree of segmentation of the State. As the Ngoni army increased in size, so it became easier for them to capture more people, so that what we may describe as an inflationary spiral in population was set up. The Ngoni State was like a snowball which grows larger and larger as it is pushed from place to place, but still remains uniform throughout. At last it becomes unwieldly and must be broken

[46] Wiese, 'Expedição', pp. 471-2, and 'Geschichte', pp. 189-90.

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before it can be moved further. The same accumulation of snow then begins again with each fragment.

We can readily see that this system was one of great flexibility. The rules of the system were fairly definite, and the principles of agnatic descent and primogeniture were never violated. Yet it was a system very susceptible to manipulation, and one appropriate to a society with a rapidly expanding population recruited mainly by capture. The relationships between a man and his wives, his sons, and his other dependants provided the basis for differentiation within his segment, but they did not determine in advance which wife should be made leader of a bevy, which bevy should get most dependants, which of his younger sons he should favour, which dependants he would appoint as lieutenants.

Without a continual inflow of captives this wide pattern of segmentation might not have produced anything more than a lineage system on the same lines as the Zulu and Swazi. The captives were the bulk which swelled the segments, which benefited one segment at the expense of another. This system provided quasi-agnatic affiliation to people whose actual parentage was unknown or irrelevant. Because of this source of supply, much greater segmentation was achieved in each generation than was possible in an orthodox lineage system. The whole system lasted only seventy-seven years for the Fort Jameson group, corresponding roughly to three generations, yet almost the whole population of the Ngoni groups stemming from Zwangendaba, numbering perhaps half a million people, could at the end of that time trace quasi-agnatic ascent back to him or his forebears.

Membership of age-sets gave rise to one set of bonds which cut across the lines of segmentary division; those bonds created by marriage gave rise to another. A man in one segment was linked by ties of affinity to men in several others, and because of these ties interacted with them on formal and informal occasions, exchanged cattle with them, and had a joint interest with them in their common descendants. Though segments were not exogamous, a wife from a structurally distant segment had in general a higher status and was more likely to be selected as leader of a bevy than was one from the same minor segment as her husband. Within a segment a son of the lord might marry the daughter of a lieutenant, and lieutenants sometimes married daughters of their lord, thus blending the bonds of affinity with those of quasi-agnation. As the heads of segments, married women played a more important role than we usually associate with them in strongly patrilineal societies. The lady of a segment retained her connexion with the segments

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Chapter Three

DEFEAT

1. Structural change 2. Portugal or Britain 3. Concession hunters 4. European consolidation 5. Friction 6. Fighting 7. Cattle 8. The end of a system

1. *Structural change*

178 619 64 THE STRUGGLES of the Ngoni during the middle of the nineteenth century were with groups of roughly the same character as themselves. The processes at work in the Ngoni social system were in the main repetitive. The State grew in size, split, and grew again, but it was still largely the same kind of State as before. Even though there were important differences between the Ngoni and their opponents, particularly after 1835, those whom they encountered were sufficiently like themselves to be absorbed into the system without difficulty. In the nomenclature of Radcliffe-Brown and the Wilsons, there was social circulation in the Ngoni State but little change in its structural form.[1] For this reason we have been concerned in our analysis so far with but few of the historical details of that period, and have dealt with history only in an abstract and generalized form. Many of the inconsistencies between various versions of the tribal legend have not been [114] significant. For example, Chief Ciwele Ndhlovu of Dowa broke off from the main body of Ngoni, according to some writers before, and according to others after, the split between Mpezeni and Mwambera.[2] It does not matter for our particular purpose which of these versions is correct, for we are here concerned only to establish that from time to time senior lieutenants did split off with their segments to form independent chiefdoms. This process, of which Ciwele's secession is an example, was essentially the same before and after the Mpezeni-Mwambera split.

648 178 12 After 1880 Ngoni history entered a new phase, and social processes began to operate which were not repetitive. Changes began to occur in the form of the Ngoni social field, for instead of interacting with groups similar to themselves, the Ngoni became involved in a much wider network of social relations. This change

[1] Radcliffe-Brown, 'On social structure', p. 4; Wilson, *Social change*, p. 58.
[2] cf. Chibambo, *My Ngoni*, pp. 32-3; Winterbottom, 'Histories', p. 18; Wiese, 'Geschichte', p. 186.

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which we shall be more directly concerned with the smaller groupings of Ngoni society. There are, however, a few points that must be mentioned here.

In Fort Jameson and in a few of the towns on the Northern Rhodesia railway line there are Ngoni members of the Native Urban Courts. These posts are largely in the gift of the Native Authority although they are not paid by the Native Treasury. The man recommended by the Paramount Chief to the Administration is usually the one appointed, and he acts as a representative of the Native Authority in the town as well as carrying out his duties in the court. He is likely to act as host when a chief visits his town, and messages are sometimes sent through him to men and women who are wanted in connexion with affairs in Ngoniland.

Every few years or so a chief goes to visit the towns. Here he is received by his people and those of other Ngoni counties, and may be given substantial presents. The Paramount Chief is sometimes called to Lusaka by the Administration to attend some function, and newly appointed chiefs go to a school near there, where courses of instruction are held for them. Thus although migrants may leave their villages and not return to them for many years, there are opportunities for them to keep in touch with rural happenings. Most of their contacts are with their kinsfolk, who visit them or write to them, but there are also these links with the political system of the tribe. When political offices have to be filled, not only Ngoni living rurally are considered but also those in the towns whose whereabouts are known. Sometimes the fare is sent for the lorry journey back to Fort Jameson if the town-dweller has no money.

There is little contact between the Fort Jameson group and other Ngoni groups. In 1914 envoys came from the northern Nyasaland group in order, it is said, formally to confirm Mpezeni as Paramount Chief of the Fort Jameson group, but there does not seem to have been any subsequent contact between the heads of the two groups. Individuals from northern Nyasaland from time to time find their way into Fort Jameson District, usually while searching for work on the tobacco farms, in the same way as men from other tribes. These immigrants may persuade some of their relatives to join them and so build up sufficient following to set themselves up as village headmen.

Contact is naturally closer with the two Nyasaland counties formerly under Mpezeni and many Ngoni in Northern Rhodesia have relatives across the border. The border twists and turns, and there is no physical indication of its existence on the ground save

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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the northern Ngoni kingdom. Other groups of these Ngoni were found in three separate states in the Dowa and Kotakota districts. The Ngoni in the Ncheu district were known as Gomani's Ngoni and will be called in this book the central Ngoni kingdom. Four states which separated from this kingdom were found in the Dedza, Lilongwe and Cholo districts. The Ngoni in Fort Manning district belonged to Mpeseni's kingdom in the Fort Jameson district of Northern Rhodesia.

According to these census figures, the northern Ngoni kingdom with the three separated states accounted for 69,706; the central kingdom with the four separated states accounted for 46,891. Leaving out the Fort Manning Ngoni, there were 71,354 Ngoni in the rest of Nyasaland who had at one time formed part of the northern and central kingdoms and their offshoots, but who had dispersed in search of work and had made large settlements in the towns and on the estates of the southern province where employment was to be found. A similar dispersion from the main Ngoni concentrations in Nyasaland to Southern and Northern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa had taken place which formed part of the extensive emigration from Nyasaland in search of better employment than that available in the territory.

The existence of two Ngoni kingdoms, several smaller Ngoni states, and a still larger number of people enumerated as Ngoni but dispersed in every district of Nyasaland, poses a number of problems for the anthropologist. In this book I have concentrated on the two Ngoni kingdoms and on the Ngoni culture found in them in the 1930's. It was my intention, by focusing on the two kingdoms, to show that there was an Ngoni culture which had common elements in both areas and hence was shared to some extent by all the Ngoni living in Nyasaland. We shall be asking the questions in Part I—Who can be called Ngoni? What is Ngoni culture? Why do people in every district of Nyasaland enumerate themselves as Ngoni though a large number no longer live in the Ngoni kingdoms or in the Ngoni states? Are we discussing a people whose cultural affiliation survives political dispersal? The chief problem in the relation between the Ngoni kingdoms as political states and Ngoni culture will be stated in Part I and illustrated and analysed in the rest of the book. In this chapter, we shall examine the ethnic composition of the inhabitants of the two Ngoni kingdoms.

ETHNIC ELEMENTS IN THE NGONI KINGDOMS

There were four main groups of people in the Ngoni kingdoms, distinguished by the areas from which their ancestors came and designated by the Ngoni as 'those from the south', 'those from south of the Zambesi', 'those from the march' and 'those from this country'. The Ngoni said that the clan descent name of a person showed to which group he or she belonged.

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FR5 Ngoni FR5

(a) *'Those from the south'*

These were the descendants of the leaders of the two main Ngoni groups represented by the two Ngoni kingdoms, with their followers, who left Natal during the wars of Shaka. They were South-eastern Bantu of Nguni stock, and when they were first encountered by Europeans in Nyasaland, the Europeans called them Zulus and spoke of their language as Zulu. Ngoni informants in the 1930's who were regarded as most reliable repudiated their relationship with the Zulu, and always referred to their ethnic origin as a people of Swazi stock. Y. M. Cibambo whose knowledge of Ngoni traditions was unrivalled, said in his book *My Ngoni of Nyasaland*—'Very many of them [the Ngoni] came from Swaziland, which is north of Zululand'.[1] A nostalgic refrain occurred in more than one of their traditional songs:

> Come let us go to Swaziland
> Where the people die fat.[2]

Cultural affinities between the Ngoni in Nyasaland and the people now living in Swaziland and, to a lesser degree, with the Zulu, will be examined in several chapters of this book. In the chapter on clan descent names in Part III, we shall compare the clan names called Swazi by the Ngoni with the lists of clan names given by Bryant in *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* [3] and with the list given by Kuper, in *An African Aristocracy*,[4] of the Swazi and pre-Swazi clans. The military organization of the Ngoni, the age-set system which formed part of it, and other cultural features which will be discussed in Chapter III of this section, all show a general cultural affinity with the peoples of the northern Nguni group of the South-eastern Bantu.

The separation of the Ngoni group from the parent stock, which took place at about the same time as the Ndebele and the Shangaan groups fought their way north, occurred before the Swazi and Zulu kingdoms took final form. It is more correct, therefore, to say that Ngoni cultural affinities were with the northern Nguni group as a whole than to say they were off-shoots of either the Zulu or the Swazi. The Ngoni themselves used the designation 'Swazi' for the people with clan descent names whose ancestors left the south with the original party. Some of the older men remembered their fathers and grandfathers speaking of their clan as having belonged to the Ntungwa group, the Mtetwa group, the Msane group, before the departure of the Ngoni took place. This differentiation into pre-Swazi tribal and clan groupings was not in the 1930's one to which the Ngoni gave much attention. In talking about their southern origin it was the Swazi connexion which they emphasized.

[1] Cibambo, Y. M. *My Ngoni of Nyasaland*. Lutterworth Press, 1942, p. 8.
[2] Read, M. 'Songs of the Ngoni People.' *Bantu Studies*, March 1937, p. 10.
[3] Bryant, A. T. *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*. Longmans, 1929, pp. 681–97.
[4] Kuper, H. *An African Aristocracy*. O.U.P., 1947, p. 233.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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to leave and went straight to the country of the Makombe. They conquered it and came to the Nyungwi and conquered them too. 173

When they wanted to cross the Zambesi they made medicine and beat the water with a stick and separated it. All the army crossed and reached Kalumbi. They fought there, and there Magadlela died and Mgoola took care of the chieftainship. Mgoola came with all the army to Ntumba and caught many Ntumba people. In the Ntumba country Mputa entered the chieftainship.

(*b*) '*Those from south of the Zambesi*'

In the northern kingdom two main groups were included in this category: those whose clan names showed Tsonga origin and those who showed Karanga origin. Bryant [1] wrote of the army under Zwangendaba hacking its way through Tsongaland almost by the same route as the army under Soshangane, who fought and defeated him on the headwaters of the Sabi river. To his Tsonga adherents Zwangendaba added a number from the Karanga country, many of whom, trained to fight by the Ngoni, became famous warriors in the Ngoni campaigns farther north. 619 ● 173

The Ngoni under Ngwana with Nqaba and his army kept nearer to the coast, and fought their battle with Soshangane (whom they called Gaza in the text quoted) on the Busi river near Sofala. The two main groups of adherents whom they forced to join them were from the Ndau and Venda peoples, called collectively the Venda group by the Ngoni. Bryant [1] spoke of Nqaba's conquest of the Ndau people on the Busi river, which would indicate that the Venda leaders and their families were already part of the Ngoni army when the Ndau were added. Although, according to central Ngoni tradition, Ngwana's army with its followers zigzagged across the country between the Sabi river and the Zambesi, they do not appear to have collected adherents in any large numbers from the tribal areas through which they passed. This supposition is only based on internal evidence, that of the clan names recognized by the Ngoni as having come from south of the Zambesi. 174

(*c*) '*Those from the march*'

After crossing the Zambesi, the central Ngoni went by the Kirk Range into the western part of what is now the Ncheu district. Then they turned east, crossed the Shire river near Fort Johnston and went up the east side of the lake to the Livingstone mountains in the Songea district of Tanganyika where they fought with the northern Ngoni under the Gama clan. The clan descent names of followers acquired on this route included those from the Ntumba people on the Kirk Range whom they conquered on their first arrival in Nyasaland, and the Tengo people from Songea, some of whom were incorporated with 173 619

[1] op. cit. p. 461

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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these Ngoni before they were defeated and driven out of Songea by the Gama group of Ngoni.

The northern Ngoni, who travelled east of the Luangwa valley into Tanganyika, acquired followers with clan descent names from the Nsenga in Northern Rhodesia and the Safwa and Sukuma in Tanganyika.

(*d*) '*Those from this country*'

Under this category were included all the local peoples in Nyasaland who either were conquered by the Ngoni or surrendered to them, and who were brought within the rule of the Ngoni kingdoms. These in the northern kingdom were chiefly of Tumbuka and Henga clans, with others from Cewa and Bemba stock. In the central kingdom the local clan names were of Cewa and Yao origin.

Two conclusions emerge from this review of the ethnic composition of the Ngoni kingdoms. The first is that the use of Ngoni as a tribal designation causes confusion. In this study the term Ngoni will be used when referring to persons whose clan descent names show that their ancestors were of Swazi or trans-Zambesi stock—that is categories (*a*) and (*b*) in this chapter. This criterion of who were Ngoni would probably not correspond with the criteria used in the 1945 census enumeration. The enumerators may have asked a direct question, 'Are you Ngoni?'; they may have asked the person's clan descent name; they may have asked to which kingdom or chiefdom he belonged; or they may have asked all four questions or any two. Since the Ngoni were found in every district in the country it was likely that there was little uniformity in the form of the questions asked by the enumerators or in the criteria admitted by those being questioned for declaring themselves to be Ngoni.

The second conclusion is that even if the criterion is accepted that the Ngoni were those whose ancestors crossed the Zambesi, the Ngoni kingdoms as political states included all the four elements (*a*), (*b*), (*c*) and (*d*). The status of the ethnically distinct groups in the kingdoms varied according to their clan names which indicated whether they came from the south or had been incorporated at a later stage. Ngoni forms of culture were found not only in groups (*a*) and (*b*), as would be expected, but often among families in group (*c*) who, through fighting in the Ngoni armies and marrying into Ngoni families, had adopted their social and ritual pattern.[1]

[1] Since the first draft of this book was written, Dr. Barnes's study of the Fort Jameson Ngoni, *Politics in a Changing Society* (O.U.P., 1954), has appeared. The early history of the Ngoni in the northern kingdom is the same as that of the Fort Jameson Ngoni, up to the final separation of the kingdoms under Mpeseni and Mbelwa. Dr. Barnes's excellent bibliography gives the sources for the historical documentation of their travels. A brief sketch of the history of the two groups under the leadership of the Jere and Maseko Paramounts is given in Mary Tew's *Peoples of the Lake Nyasa Region*.

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Ngoni, he was welcomed everywhere as one who could speak with authority about the culture and customs of his people, and the central Ngoni, when talking about their history and customs, wanted him to realize that they too were 'real Ngoni' (*Ngoni eni eni*). The general relationships before 1939 were that the political separation between the kingdoms and their secession states was accepted as final. On the social and cultural level, the Ngoni from one state sought contacts with the Ngoni from another state or kingdom in preference to contacts with other ethnic groups. In using the term Ngoni in this context, as throughout this book, I am referring to people with Swazi and trans-Zambesi clan descent names.

THE MAIN POLITICAL ELEMENTS IN THE NGONI KINGDOMS

The District Commissioner of Ncheu in his report for 1935, after the Native Administration Ordinance had been in operation for over a year, wrote of the central Ngoni kingdom: 'The tribal system is, comparatively speaking, intact under a chief who commands universal respect.' [1] The political system of the Ngoni in both kingdoms was based on a ruling aristocracy in which the Paramount of the royal clan was the head, supported by influential members of his own clan and of other leading clans. There were three main elements in this ruling aristocracy: the Paramount, with whose office was linked provision for a regency at the death of the incumbent and during the minority of his successor; the subordinate chiefs who ruled under him in recognized areas; and the heads of Swazi clans called *alumuzana*. I shall use these terms, chiefs and *alumuzana*, when speaking of the Ngoni kingdoms. In the northern kingdom all six chiefs was of the royal clan. In the central kingdom none of the six chiefs were of the royal clan but, with one exception, all were recognized as *alumuzana*. This distribution of authority among the six chiefs under the Paramount in the northern kingdom meant that several of the leading *alumuzana* felt excluded from political control of the villages and area which they were said to 'own', because they had no recognized court. This led at times to friction between them and the chiefs of the royal clan. In the central kingdom the position was different, for though some *alumuzana* were recognized as chiefs, others were not, and friction occurred at times between the chiefs and other *alumuzana*, and also between the chiefs and members of the royal clan. In both areas allegiance to the Paramount was, however, a strong unifying element.

The ruling aristocracy was in its turn supported by a hierarchy of officials, some traditional, some appointed to meet modern requirements

[1] *Annual Report of the Provincial Commissioner for the Nyasaland Protectorate*, 1935, p. 34.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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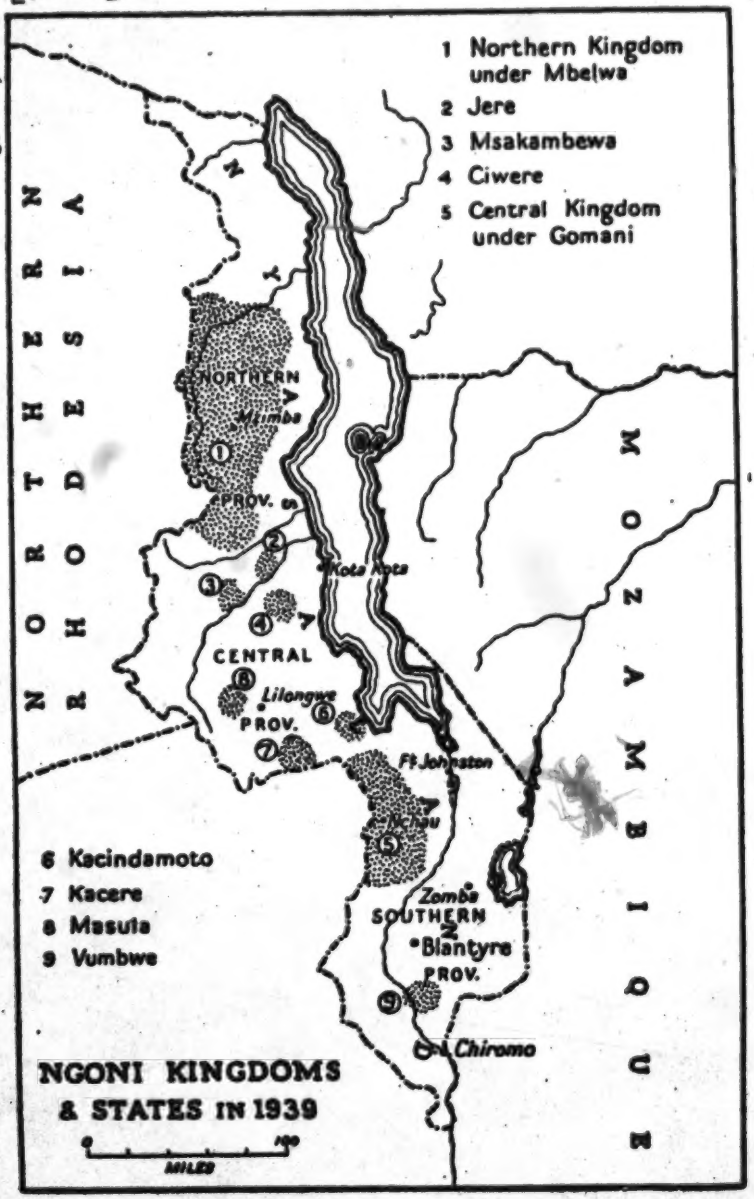

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
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then meant running out of the compound to the freedom of the village. At that time young children might behave outrageously and be punished for it, but they were not held accountable. The nurse girls and the mother, or some other adult, was blamed for letting the child grow up with such an uncontrolled temper or appetite or tongue. Once children were recognized as having passed the young child stage, that is when they had their second teeth, they themselves were held accountable for their behaviour and punished more severely, even though parents were also blamed for careless upbringing. The social sanctions of rebuke and ridicule, which began to operate in the later years of young childhood to only a limited extent, were now seen in their full force, made use of by adults, and still more effectively by the children's own age-mates. The fear of estrangement, of social ostracism as the penalty for failing to conform to the required manners and ways of living, had increasing force as the children grew older. As little children they were buttressed and protected by adults in their childish quarrels with, and moods and attitudes towards, other children. As boys in the dormitory and as girls in the girls' circle they had no longer such protection, and the result was that they became increasingly sensitive to the opinion of their peers. Professor Wilson in her study of Nyakusa age-villages, has called this social awareness the quality known as 'being good company'—getting on well with their contemporaries.

It was at this stage, at the beginning of the children's newly-found independence, that the ear-piercing ceremony took place. In contrast with the neighbouring peoples, the Ngoni had no facial or body markings, and it was the pierced ears which showed they were true Ngoni. In the days of warfare, captives, especially boys and men, were forcibly made to have their ears pierced, and hence a number of men in the Ngoni kingdoms who were not of Ngoni clans were found with pierced ears. Sometimes their children went to their parents and said, 'We want to be made Ngoni now.'

8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

829 178 blame the Europeans for it; but it remains part of the distinctive cultural heritage of the tribe.

182 As we might expect, notions of this kind do not provide sanctioned standards of conduct nor ideal patterns towards which Ngoni strive. They may be used to explain or justify a state of affairs, as we have seen, but they do not directly determine action. An individual who departs from traditional custom, in these terms, is not necessarily censured. Indeed, men who are [591] knowledgeable about the glorious past do not follow traditional ways any more than do less-well-informed people. According to tradition the Ngoni are a virilocal people, yet if a man goes to live with his wife's relatives his own kinsfolk cannot force him to return by appeal to this virilocal tradition. [606] Traditionally a man avoids his mother-in-law. Yet I once saw an aristocratic man, a great authority on traditional history, on leave from work sitting on a verandah chatting with his mother-in-law. I said to him, "I thought a man should avoid his mother-in-law." He laughed and replied, "Yes, so he should. This behaviour is disgusting, and as soon as I come to live here permanently I shall see that customs are properly followed."

647 619 In certain situations the Fort Jameson Ngoni appear as a tribe in contrast to other tribes. The tribe is an administrative unit, with its own chiefs, its own area and sometimes its own District Officer. Representatives from each tribe in the region sit together to form the Native Urban Court and the 693 Provincial Advisory Council. The Ngoni representatives on these bodies tend to present distinctively Ngoni views to contrast with the views of their 184 colleagues. Thus there may be a discussion on wills. There is an Ngoni view, 648 a Cewa view, and so on. The Ngoni representative repeats the old story 182 about bridewealth, virilocal residence, the rights of the eldest son, and these are recorded as being the Ngoni custom in the matter. Even when discussing such an apparently modern issue as wills, the tendency is to go back to this mythical past. It is in terms of this past, in reality as well as in myth, that Ngoni are different from their neighbours. In the present, as contrasted with Europeans, Ngoni and Cewa are much the same. Ngoni pay bridewealth in the same way as the English eat roast beef. It is a national characteristic, but 183 one located in the minds of men rather than observable in their actions or their aspirations. Instead of the scarifications and totemic observances which distinguish their neighbours, Ngoni express their tribal identity by having distinctive customs which, conveniently, need not be followed.

183 In the Native Urban Court a similar process appears to operate, but here, 692 unlike at the Advisory Council, there is a greater need to come to grips with 184 real situations which require action, and tribal distinctiveness is tempered with practical reality. In the purely Ngoni Native Courts appeals are made to traditional practice in a different way. The courts are required by the 671 Administration to follow tribal custom and people know that the courts are 692 bound in this way. In fact, however, the courts have continually to deal with 183 new situations and to make decisions which are unprecedented. This is done

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

one party of them came up from the south, and partly to divisions among the Ngoni during the period of settlement.

About 115 years ago the ancestors of these Ngoni left their homes in the present Zululand and Swaziland for their long trek north. The immediate cause of their departure was the defeat of Zwidi, chief of the Ndwandwe people, by Chaka, the history of whose military career in Zululand is well known and needs no repetition here. As part of Zwidi's people, the Ngoni did not want to stay under Chaka, and the same impetus and military skill which set up Chaka as the Zulu Napoleon drove the Ngoni northward as far as Lake Tanganyika, a conquering military horde amassing followers on the way. To-day they are found in three large groups and several smaller ones, the large groups known as the 'countries' of Mpezeni, Mwambera, and Gomani, who are the Ngoni Paramount Chiefs.[1]

These groups of people with their southern origin, settled among people who had a totally different language and social structure, present to the anthropologist a highly complex situation to investigate. He must at the outset ask the questions, 'Who are these Ngoni? Have they a separate identity as a people, marked by distinctive social and political institutions?' After living among them for nearly a year I am convinced that it is correct to speak of the Ngoni as a distinctive group; that they themselves are very conscious of their separate identity as a people, and that they can point to certain of their institutions, notably their language and political, territorial, and kinship groupings, which are definitely Ngoni, that is, of southern origin, and which distinguish them from the people among whom they settled. The complexities of this situation involve the analysing of the ethnic elements included in this term 'Ngoni' and the determining of the sense in which it is to be used. They involve also an explanation of what is meant by the expression 'a distinctive Ngoni culture', or 'distinctive Ngoni institutions'. The anthropologist who is interested in culture contact must go further and indicate the nature of the double contact caused first by the intermingling of the Ngoni with other tribes, and then by the advent of the Europeans. It is not possible in this article to do justice to all these aspects of an intricate problem.

[1] For the purposes of this article these are the only groups which will be considered.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

political and military organization into an effective group. What meaning, therefore, can we give to the term 'Ngoni', and how can this group which calls itself Ngoni be analysed into its component parts?

II. WHAT DOES THE TERM 'NGONI' MEAN? The references made hitherto show that the term 'Ngoni' is used in several different connotations. It is, strictly speaking, an historical linguistic term, and referred originally to that group of clans described as 'Nguni' because they spoke a language classified to-day as the Nguni dialects.[1] Somewhere on the march north the Ngoni changed the *u* to an *o*, and arrived in their present areas saying 'We are Ngoni'. They assert emphatically that it was on the march they began to say 'We are Ngoni', and they suggest that it was important to have some general term to cover individuals from many mixed groups.

The name Ngoni having been assumed on the march north, it obviously at first only covered those clans which were of true southern origin, or as we should say to-day, of Zulu or Swazi stock. This is the meaning which Ngoni still has when used in its narrow or strict sense to-day. In collecting the clan names in a village, for example, the headman says 'Those are Ngoni, those are Makalanga, those are Nsenga', and so on. The true Ngoni clans are those most highly honoured, the real aristocrats, and a little experience teaches the field worker to recognize their bearing as they walk about among the rest. In a village containing several clans, the houses of the Ngoni clans occupy the most honourable places in the middle of the horse-shoe formation surrounding the cattle kraal. In any meeting at a chief's village the men and women of Ngoni clans sit nearest to the chief and drink beer before the rest. This ranking by clans, however, does not stop at the true Ngoni. They lead the hierarchy, but other clans also claim precedence in a rough geographical order of the tribes absorbed from south to north. The true Ngoni illustrate this by saying, 'In old days the only men who were made *indunas* were those of the Swazi, Zulu, Suto, and Tonga clans. After we settled here, *indunas* were made from the Makalanga, Nsenga, and Sukuma clans'. There is therefore

[1] See *Bantu Studies*, Sept. 1934, for classification of the South African languages. Also A. T. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, for list of Nguni clans.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

serve their own culture, so that they were not submerged in the very different cultures round them? The Ngoni themselves give the answer to this first question, saying, 'We fought with spears and shields; those others had only bows and arrows and sometimes guns.'[1] The making of these shields, which formerly gave courage and protection to the warriors, is to this day almost a ritual. To watch a chief working at one on the threshold of his hut, or a village headman and his friends cutting and shaping one in the kraal, is to realize the value put on them by the Ngoni. They refuse to make them for sale as curiosities, and several Europeans have told me that they have tried in vain to get one.

Having conquered by the shield and spear, the Ngoni maintained their prestige by their highly developed political organization. All around them were small chieftains owning a few villages with no integration in any large political unit.[2] The Ngoni state was focussed in the *inkosi*, the Paramount Chief, who was at once the 'owner'[3] of the land, the 'head'[3] of the state, and the 'father'[3] of his people. The Ngoni, as we have seen, are always ready to indicate those institutions and related traditions which mark them off from the surrounding tribes, and which give their state a cultural reality of its own. They point first to their language and their traditions of Dingiswayo, Zwidi, and Chaka as proving their southern origin. Other neighbouring peoples have vague traditions of wandering from north to south, or west to east, but the Ngoni know exactly where they came from and by what route. Their language is almost identical with old Zulu. I was told by many Europeans that it hardly existed any longer, and I was therefore surprised to find to what an extent it is still spoken and used. Most of the true Ngoni to-day are bilingual[4]; with the exception of a few very old Ngoni people, everyone to-day speaks one of the local vernaculars, Nsenga, Tumbuka, or Chewa.[5] Ngoni is the language of the aristocrats, and a large proportion of the true

[1] The kind of antique guns traded to the Chewa by the Portuguese and Arabs were no match for the Ngoni skill with the long throwing-spear or the short stabbing-assegai, and the bullets were such that the stout cow-hide shields of the Ngoni could withstand them. Hence the consternation of the Ngoni when the machine-gun bullets of the British troops pierced their shields in the Ngoni 'war'.

[2] With the possible exception of Chikuramayembe, Chief of the Henga.

[3] Translations of vernacular terms.

[4] Or trilingual if they know English too.

[5] The same as Nyanja.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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Ngoni understand and speak it. It is in fact one of the distinguishing marks between the true Ngoni and the rest. It is convenient for a chief to be able to exchange a few remarks with a relative or an important visitor in a language which the onlookers cannot follow, and I have also heard a chief do the same with one of his *indumas* during a case in court. When I played Zulu records on my gramophone the aristocrats and old warriors drew near to listen, while the nobodies who could not understand fell back naturally. It is interesting to see how this language test brings out the social distinctions based on family and rank, and produces generally an inferiority reaction among the non-Ngoni.

As other distinguishing institutions the Ngoni point out their dances[1] and songs; their former military organization with its related system of age grades; their political organization under the Paramount Chief with his hierarchy of *amakosana*, *abalumuzana*, *izinduna*, *amanxusa*, &c.; the system of courts, again a hierarchy, with the laws administered in them; their village organization which still preserves the division into *izigawa* or hamlets, characteristic of the very big Ngoni villages of old days; the Ngoni code of ethics, differing radically from the code of the neighbouring tribes, with its insistence on truth, chastity, and personal discipline; and their patrilineal descent in clans and inheritance of property. This last, superimposed upon the local matrilineal and matrilocal tribes, has created a variety of forms of marriage and inheritance which is almost the despair of the field worker. The Ngoni say proudly, 'We taught them to honour their sons' when pointing out how nephew succession has to a large extent given way before filial succession. The values inherent in certain Ngoni institutions have spread beyond their own areas, for one Chewa Paramount Chief told me he had for long admired the Ngoni system of filial succession and inheritance, and was now trying, in the teeth of much opposition, to introduce it into his country.

After I had been a little while among the Ngoni, and their chiefs and leading men had begun to realize my aim in field work, I was surprised by the help they gave me and the amount of co-operation they showed in my enquiries. Then one day an old *induna* revealed

[1] One Ngoni Paramount has prohibited any but Ngoni dances to be danced in his country.

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down fully and correctly. When I arrived in Chief Gomani's country, after having stayed in the other two Ngoni areas, the chiefs and leading men whom he called to see me asked at once, 'What did the other Ngoni do to show you they were Ngoni? *We* want you first to hear the story of our people.' If I said to any older man of good standing, that is of a true Ngoni clan, 'Tell me about the Ngoni', he invariably began with the traditions of the south and their trek north.

I have some fifteen long texts[1] of Ngoni history, most of which begin with the stories of Dingiswayo and Zwidi, leading on to the rise of Chaka and the Ngoni exodus from the south. These texts not only show a measure of agreement with each other, but they also are verifiable by established history as recorded by Europeans. Those texts which came from Gomani's country contain different material after the exodus from the south. For the Ngoni under the leadership of the Maseko clan came north with Mzilikazi and the Matabele, and crossing the Zambesi alone, went east of Lake Nyasa into Tanganyika.[2] The main Ngoni group under the Jere clan went west of Lake Nyasa into Tanganyika, and remained a united group until the death of Zwangendaba in 1848. A disputed succession followed and the Ngoni split up under two rival Paramounts, Mpezeni and Mwambera. The history of those years, as related to-day, is largely concerned with proving in each area that their Paramount is the only rightful one, the only one to whom the royal salute *Bayete* should be given. Mpezeni's historians say, 'Mwambera snatched *Bayete*'—and vice versa. In spite of these divergences in later history, however, the Ngoni point to their earlier history and say, 'You see we are all one people'. They are conscious of, and troubled about, their present divisions and inclined to attribute them to our premature arrival in the country. 'You came too soon. We would have fought until there was only one *inkosi*.'

The detailed knowledge of Ngoni history is regarded as the province of a specialist. 'How can a man of no wisdom remember all those names?' From time to time 'historians' tell episodes of this traditional history in the villages of the Paramount or of other im-

[1] 800–1,000 words.

[2] This is their own account and is confirmed by the Rev. Charles Stuart, formerly at Ekwendeni, but not so far recorded by other Europeans.

9: Read E-5 (1935) 1936 FR5 Ngoni FR5

the villages of certain chiefs in the south were preserved.[1] In Mwambera's country there are the names of villages belonging to nine generations of Jere chiefs, and in Gomani's country for seven generations of Maseko chiefs. Villages holding these historic names are in charge of an individual of high rank who is never called the 'owner' of that village but 'the one who takes care'. I realized how clear to the people is the historical significance of these village names, when I asked a question and they exclaimed, 'What? You do not know about Elangeni being the village of Hlachwayo? But all Ngoni people can know that.'[2]

4. Clan names. The clan names, as the Ngoni say, denote a person's 'tribe' and the respect due to him. With the prefix, *e*, *a*, *na* (according to the area) the clan name is used as a respectful form of address, and always when thanking for a gift or favour. The tone of reverence with which the great clan names are thus mentioned is itself an indication of the rank and honour of a person.

5. Village descent. In old days Ngoni villages were very much larger than to-day. The headman of a village on your first visit will always give you the genealogy of his village, how it split off from A, which split off from B, which was the *chigawa* under *induna* X of the big village of chief Y. Reciting these village genealogies generally leads to some recalling of the past, and the village notables, the *amadoda*, gather round to corroborate or correct the headman's recital.

It takes very little to stimulate the Ngoni to historical conversations. I have heard them originate in the return of a villager from Johannesburg, where he met Zulu and Swazi men and found they could speak together and had common traditions; in a sermon preached by an Ngoni minister in which he used illustrations from Ngoni warfare; in a rebuke from the Boma to a headman for trying to move his village from worn out land to a site outside the Reserve on an empty farm. And it is not only the aristocrats who take part in such conversations. Sometimes it is evident that men and boys whose fathers had been slaves are anxious to show their knowledge of Ngoni history in order to prove their unity with the true Ngoni.

[1] I am not clear yet what was the precise sociological process by which the identity of these villages was preserved.

[2] An idiomatic use which has the force of a double negative 'No one cannot know it'.

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132 84° F. and the mean minimum 61·5° F.[1] Three seasons are distinguished: the wet season, from the beginning of November until about April; the cold season, from May until July; and the hot season, from August until the rains begin again. Most of the planting takes [241] place in the first half of the wet season, and the harvest comes after the rains have ceased. There is very little fishing, but antelopes, leopards, 224 wild pig, and buck are hunted for their meat, and lions, leopards, 136 hyenas, and monkeys on account of the damage they do to crops and livestock. The greater part of the region is free enough from tsetse fly to permit cattle-keeping, and for the tribe as a whole there is approxi- [231] mately one head of cattle to every two people. Pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens are also kept.

171 The material culture of the tribe is similar to that of their neigh- 342 bours. They live in one- or two-roomed huts of bamboo or pole and 323 mud; some women make pottery and some men make reed mats; 285 all buy their clothes and their hoes from the shops.[2]

Three languages are used in the region: Ci-Ngoni, a language akin to 197 Zulu, is now heard only in songs and royal praises; Ci-Nyanja is taught in the schools and is used for communication with Europeans and Indians; while the normal language used every day in the villages is a dialect of Ci-Nsenga.

I. THE STATE

Old Administrative System

186 The Ngoni think of themselves as different from their neighbours ● 619 because of their chieftainship. The other tribes do not, in the eyes 642 of the Ngoni, possess the same kind of pyramidal and centralized organization which was characteristic of the régime of Mpezeni I and which persists in a modified form at the present time.

619 The important positions in the old political structure were occupied 631 by members of the royal lineage, their queens, the regional governors,[3] 554 and the lieutenants.[4] The political system was at the same time the territorial system, residence being determined by political allegiance. The pattern of residence and allegiance persisted despite the movement of the tribe as a whole from one region to another and despite

[1] Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, pp. 2–3.
[2] See my *Material Culture of the Fort Jameson Ngoni*.
[3] *Mulumzana*, pl. *alumzana*. [4] *Nduna*, pl. *nduna*.

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the absence of any definite internal land boundaries between the territories of one political segment and another. The constant elements were the residential groups that we now know as villages,[1] and we may liken them to ships of different sizes and importance that preserve a loose formation while the fleet sails from place to place. Villages, discrete clusters of dwellings in comparative proximity and separated from one another by uninhabited stretches of garden-land and bush, were internally divided into divisions,[2] and from time to time these divisions broke away from one another or from their parent village to form new villages of their own. This process of divisional fission was characteristic of the commoner villages. Royal villages were usually formed by a parallel process by which an important member of the royal lineage established a new village for one or more of his queens by recruitment from his own natal village. The eldest son by the senior queen in that village then became the head of the segment of the royal lineage associated with the village. Thus the segmentation of the royal lineage was reflected in a proliferation of royal villages.

In the period immediately prior to the conquest of the tribe by British forces in 1898, there were four important royal villages, with populations of probably several thousands each. One belonged to a brother of Mpezeni, and the other three were controlled by groups of Mpezeni's own queens and their sons. Associated with each royal village were several regional governors, each of whom was responsible for the well-being of a group of lesser villages, and who resided among them in a village of his own. These lesser villages were commoner villages, each under its own headman. Each large royal village had also a number of lesser royal villages attached to it, and also many commoner villages were attached to a royal village of some sort directly, and not through a regional governor.[3]

Each important person, chief, member of the royal lineage, regional governor, or headman was assisted by a number of lieutenants, trusted subordinates who were usually not patrilineal kinsmen of their principal but who were sometimes related affinally. These lieutenants were ranked in order of the creation of their posts by their principal and assisted him in the control of his unit of administration. In the case of Mpezeni himself, however, there were two kinds of lieutenants. Those people known as the lieutenants of Mpezeni were

[1] *Musi*, pl. *misi*.
[2] *Cigabo*, pl. *vigabo*.
[3] Cf. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, p. 66, for a similar system among the Swazi.

/10 cont'd/

304 tribal mark and a hole made for individual ornamentation. Earrings,
301 beads, and other ear ornaments are worn, including safety pins.
Young girls from time to time make black rectangular marks on their
304 cheeks by pressing on to them strips of nkholosa grass. These marks
302 are quite black at first, and gradually lose their colour over a period of a year. Scarification of the face and body is carried out on both men and women for ornament as well as for medication, but there
531 is very little regularity of pattern, save for the inverted crescent
619 mark made between the eyebrows of women. This is the Nsenga tribal mark.

For dancing, most people wear their best clothes, and girls
535 and young women carry whistles on lanyards round their necks. When dancing ngoma, the most important tribal dance, miniature shields are carried, and a special type of knobbed stick that is held aloft. Less frequently seen are the wrist and ankle trappings, and skin garments that used to be associated with this and other regimental dances. Nowadays, women's skirts and frocks are sometimes seen worn by men on such occasions.

Single-ended and double-ended drums are used as accompani-
534 ments to dancing, while boys play hand pianos. Girls play on a single string fiddle made from a reed. Whistles are bought from the stores. Old fashioned fiddles with gourd resonators are rare.

534 Boys spend much of their time making and playing with toys of various kinds. Animals, men, and motor cars are fashioned out of mud, while more elaborate motor cars are made from mealie stalks. A favourite toy consists of two wheels, up to six inches in diameter, on an axle with a handle some four or five feet long, terminated in another wheel of the same size. This construction, made of straw, representing the elements of a motor car, is pushed along by boys of ages four to ten.

The well-known game, involving four rows of twelve holes, with three stones in each hole, is played by men, usually in holes scooped out in the ground. A favourite game of girls and boys consists of throwing up beans with one hand and catching them again